

Zou language

Zou or Zokam (literally "of the hills"), or **Zo, Zomi, Yo, Yaw, or Jo**, is a Mizo-Kuki-Chin languages or Northern Kuki-Chin language^[2] originating in northwestern Burma and spoken also in Mizoram and Manipur in northeastern India, where the name is spelled **Zo**.

The name Zou is sometimes used as a cover term for the languages of all Mizo people (zo people) i.e.Kukish and Chin peoples, especially the Zo people.

The term 'Zo' has been employed in many books to denote the word 'Zou', for simple reason of phonetic usage.

The Zou themselves employ the various terms Zo, Zou, and Zomi to mean their tribe.^[4]

Zou	
Zo, Zomi	
Native to	Burma, India
Region	In Burma: Chin State, Tiddim, Chin Hills; In India: Mizoram and Manipur, Chandel, Singnat subdivision and Sungnu area; Churachandpur districts; Assam.
Ethnicity	Zou
Native speakers	187,500 ^[1]
Language family	Sino-Tibetan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kuki-Chin-Mizo languages or Kuki-Chin^[2] ▪ Northern or Northern ▪ Zou
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	zom
Glottolog	zouu1235 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/zouu1235) ^[3]

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Phonology of Zou Language

The set of 22 Zou consonantal phonemes can be established on the basis of the following minimal pairs or overlapping words. Besides these 22 Phonemes, 1 consonant is a borrowed phoneme (i.e. /r/), which is found only in loan words, in very rare cases (e.g. /r/ in /rəŋ/ "color"). Along with these consonants, Zou has 7 vowels: i, e, a, ɔ, o, u, ə.^[5]

Consonant Phonemes

Plosives(stops)	Bilabial	labiodental	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
Unaspirated	p b		t d	c ʃ	k g	?
Aspirated	p ^h		t ^h		k ^h	
Fricatives		v		s		h
Affricate			tʃ			
Nasals	m		n		ŋ	
l approximant		u		l		
Approximants	w		j			

Vowels

	unrounded	rounded
Open back	i	u
Close-mid back	e	o ɔ
Mid back	(ə)	

Types of Zo verbs

The Zo verbs can be classified into three types: Stem (1), Stem (2), Stem (3) as given below:^[6]

Types of Zo Verbs

Stem 1	Stem 2	Stem 3	Stem 4
piê-give	pie?	pe-	pieh
puo-carry	puo?	po-	pua-

Tone

According to David Mortensen (2003) a syllable, in isolation, displays the Lexical Tone. Abramson (1979) states that the citation form of a monosyllabic word may be viewed as bearing the ideal manifestation of a tone. According to Matisoff (1999, p. 88), “Sinospheric TB languages tend to be more strictly monosyllabic than others.” Tone-bearing units (TBU) is the morphological unit in which only a single tone specification is found in the pronounced form (Mazaudon, 1977). TBU is the phonological unit which receives a tonal pitch command (Yip, 2002; Gussenhoven, 2004).

Zo is monosyllabic, partially agglutinating tone language. The Zo tones are treated as Suprasegmental features in this study. Like many tone languages, the Tone Bearing Unit (Goldsmith, 1990, p. 44) is the “syllable” in Zo, whose tonal rhymes consist of i) Short/lax and Long/tense vowel quality ii) Glides (diphthongs, triphthongs) which are realized as Rising(H), Mid(M) and, Falling(L) and Low tones in isolation respectively. In terms of lexical phonology, the basic tonemes or underlying tones or lexical tones or inherent tonemes either have Lax (short vowel, monophthong) or Tense vowel (diphthong, triphthong) within them as the nucleus depending upon the syntactic constructions with respect to other tonemes in phrasal phonological environments in which they occur as in morphonotonemic processes.

Sample text

The following is a sample text in Zou.

Zou	English
Maw na sung ma naw in, amaw sa pi ma in leimi in i piang a, a khawh ma ma - gam lua a i lua suhsuh ih mawnate ma ei bawl in eima pumpi ei man muda maithei, Ih mawnate -eeng taang gol lua a hi man in khat veivei eima mawnate eimon maisah zolo maithei va-ia kim lai, tuate lip khap sih saang a pamai eisa, ei khua tua ngeet-nguut ngeng ngong man a ih dial dual liang luang mawna nei van nuai ei mai sah thop valong, abieh huai tapo ma Jehova ki chi Pasian khat a na om ngang tangh hi.	As we are born in sin, we cannot even love ourselves and there is no knowledge about what is forgiveness, because of the enormous sins inherited in us. Eventhough we are in this situation, in spite of our enormous sins the one who has mercy, sympathises us and forgives us our sins is the God called Jehovah.

There are four major dialects of Zou in Myanmar and India; Haidawi, Khuongnung, Thangkhal, and Khodai.

Numbers

Zo numbers are counted as follows: [7]

Zou	English	Hindi
Bem	Zero	Sunna
Khat	One	Ek
Ni	Two	Do
Thum	Three	Tin
Li	Four	Char
Nga	Five	Panch
Guh	Six	Chhe
Sagi	Seven	Sat
Giet	Eight	Ath
Kuo	Nine	Naw
Sawm	Ten	Das
Sawmlehkhat	Eleven	Gyarah
Sawmlehuo	Nineteen	Unnis
Sawmni	Twenty	Bis
Sawmthum	Thirty	Tis
Sawmkuo	Ninety	Nabbe
Za	Hundred	Ek Saw
Zanga	Five hundred	
Tul(khat)	One thousand	Hazar
Tulsawm	Ten thousand	Das Hazar
Tulza	Hundred thousand/One lakh	Lakh
Then	Million	Das Lakh
Thensawm	Ten million	
Thenza	Hundred million	
Awn	Billion	
Awn sawm	Ten billion	
Awn za	Hundred billion	

Writing systems

Zou is often written in a Latin script developed by Christian missionary J.H. Cope. In 1952, M. Siahzathang of Churachandpur created an alternative script known as Zolai or Zoulai, an alphabetic system with some alphasyllabic characteristics. The user community for the script is growing- Zou cultural, political, and literary organizations began to adopt the script beginning in the 1970s, and more recently, the Manipur State Government has shown support for both Siahzathang and the script. [8][9]

Linguistic relations

As can be seen from the name Zo ("of the hills") and Mizoram ("people hill country"), Zo among the Northern Kukish languages is closely related to the Central Kukish languages such as the Lushai or Mizo language (endonym in Lushai is *Mizo ɬawng*), the main language of Mizoram.

Zou as spoken in India is similar to the Paite language of the Paite, though Zou lacks the word-final glottal stops present in Paite.^{[10][11]}

Geographical extent

At its largest extent, the geographic area covered by the language group is a territory of approximately 60,000 square miles (160,000 km²) in size, in Burma, India and Bangladesh.^[12] However political boundaries and political debates have distorted the extent of the area in some sources.^[13]

In Burma

It is used in Chin State, Tiddim, and the Chin Hills. Use of Burmese has increased in the Zo speaking Chin State since the 1950s.^[14] *Ethnologue* reports that Zou is spoken in the following townships of Myanmar.

- Chin State: Tonzang, Hakha, and Tedim townships
- Sagaing Division: Kalay, Khampat, and Tamu townships

In India

- Manipur
 - Chandel district: Singngat subdivision and Sungnu area
 - Churachandpur district
- Assam^[15]

In Bangladesh

In Bangladesh it is used by the Bom people.^{[16][17]}

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11. *Their language is called Zou which is similar to the language spoken by the Paite. Unlike the Zou, the Paite possess the terminal glottal stop 'h'. For example, a word for 'good' is hoih in Paite while it changes into hoi in the Zou language. Sannemla (Zou folksongs) are also popular among the Paite, although they are rendered in their individual dialect bearing the characteristic phonetic differences.* Singh, Kumar Suresh; Horam, M. & Rizvi, S. H. M. (1998). *People of India: Manipur*. Anthropological Survey of India by Seagull Books. p. 253. ISBN 978-81-7154-769-2.
12. Encyclopaedia of South-Asian tribes - Volume 8 - Page 3436 Satinder Kumar - 2000
"According to the 1981 census, 12,515 persons speak the Zou language"
13. Gopalakrishnan, Ramamoorthy (1996). *Socio-political framework in North-East India*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. p. 150. OCLC 34850808 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/34850808>). "But against the background of all such conflict the Zomi National Congress went a step further in its argument for a Zomi identity by claiming Thado language as Zomi language. In the Kuki-Chin group of tribes, numerical strength has played ..."
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Further reading

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External links

- https://www.academia.edu/735120/Zo_Tonology
 - <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/zou.htm>
 - Khup speaking Zom (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjK-2lc0KQU>) on [Wikitongues](#)
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